

31 October 2011

Canterbury Earthquakes Royal Commission

Response by email to : sara.jamieson@royalcommission.govt.nz



Re : your letter of 27 October – Earthquake Prone Building Policies (EQPB)

Dear Sarah,

Further to your request for information, we can provide the following details on behalf of the Queenstown Lakes District Council :

- 1) The full Council has not formally confirmed any specific changes to its EQPB Policy, but there has been an on-going review at council officer level in terms of the relevance of the existing policy, its implementation, and learning currently being derived from the Canterbury Earthquakes.

Staff from our district were involved "on the ground" in various assistance roles throughout the disasters, including building evaluation, communications, operational support, and engineering activities. The knowledge gained from these roles is being used to help formulate the areas which our Council should consider in the formal review of the EQPB policy which is due by May 2012. We are also aware of various considerations being made by other Territorial Authorities whilst they are reviewing their policies, and are looking to assimilate some of that thinking in to our own revised policy.

Our existing policy takes a mix of pro-active and re-active measures towards assessment of buildings. In terms of Building Consent applications this is the re-active approach where we look for an upgrade of buildings at the stage of issuing a consent for a change of use – or substantial alteration. In terms of making an assessment of the current stock of buildings in the district, we have a plan to work through the buildings in the district over a timescale of 0-15 years depending on risk, and we are part-way down that path.

The on-going assessment work by Council officers which is occurring as a result of the Canterbury Earthquakes includes the following areas :

- Natural hazards assessment and evaluation – review at a local engineering level in relation to council assets and regulatory subdivision roles – specifically in relation to liquefaction risks.
- Consulting with the Otago Regional Council about identification and their management of the risks to land from natural hazards. They are working on an improved database model for identification of hazards.
- Discussions with neighbouring TA's and observance of their considerations around changes to their EQPB policies.

- 2) We have taken some steps towards advising the community about the existing policy and what we are doing, as well as some more general information about earthquake preparedness.

There is a brochure which we have developed to explain Earthquake Prone Buildings - which is particularly aimed at building owners, but is also useful to users of buildings. This was produced in May this year, and a copy is attached to this letter. Consultation was entered into with some building owners and engineers specialising in this field. It has some FAQs and a reference to the actual EQPB policy held on Councils website.

Additionally Council has produced a special edition of its "Scuttlebutt" magazine which was distributed region wide back in June 2011. This is aimed at the wider audience of the community generally.

- 3) We are not aware of any specific changes being required by insurers relating to strengthening of existing buildings. However on a related basis there has been a severe reduction in the availability (or affordability) of insurance relating to Council Infrastructure assets.

It is important to note that our Council is looking forward to the findings of the Commission in relation to this topic, to provide guidance on basic requirements and best practice approaches to dealing with existing buildings that may be earthquake-prone. We are aware there are several studies and reports underway and likely to be produced by various government departments which will guide the steps going forward for NZ. We believe it is prudent to have the availability of these reports and advice to shape the response on behalf of our local community.

Yours Faithfully



Peter Laurensen

Manager – Building